

VZCZCXRO6334
PP RUEHDE
DE RUEHAD #0330 0911238
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 011238Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2316
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHMK/AMEMBASSY MANAMA 1366
RUEHMS/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 0007
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU 0102
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 0100
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/9AF SHAW AFB SC
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0089
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0463
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 8217

S E C R E T ABU DHABI 000330

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2019

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [AE](#) [KG](#) [AF](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: UAE REACTION TO REQUEST FOR MANAS ALTERNATIVES

REF: STATE 030022

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR RICHARD OLSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (S) Summary: The UAE Chief of Staff (CoS) asked for more details on the Manas operations before he endorses a US led site survey, in his mind, USG use of Safran AB is questionable. Transit of US forces may be doable, but expanding to NATO use seems out of the question. End summary.

12. (S) Amb Olson and USLO Chief met with UAE Chief of Staff Lt Gen Hamid Thani al Rumaithy to deliver reftel demarche and assess the receptivity of the UAEG to the USG's use of Safran Air Base for personnel and cargo transload missions in support of military operations in Afghanistan. In opening comments, Amb Olson reviewed and referenced Gen Hamid Thani's trip to Wash DC (19/20 Mar) and his meeting with Gen Petraeus. It was at this meeting that Gen Petraeus first notified the UAEG that the USG may be asking for help in handling the Manas mission. Amb Olson re-emphasized the criticality of that mission and said that even as negotiations continue the long-term reliability of the Manas air bridge is questionable. Amb Olson referred to his 20 March meeting with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (MbZ), in which Ambassador had previewed a possible USG request for support. At that time, MbZ stated that if the USG helped the UAE with the Iranian threat, the UAE would help the USG with the war in Afghanistan. Ambassador noted that considerable progress had already taken place on Iran cooperation: the CentCom J2 had visited, and a joint J2/J3/J5 team was planning to come in April.

13. (S) Amb Olson asked CoS for assistance with Manas alternatives, underscoring that the USG has a site survey team ready to move forward. He also stated that preliminary analysis showed that Safran Air Base may be a suitable location (especially because of its remote location, which would allow us to completely conceal the presence of US ground forces).

14. (S) Gen Hamid Thani's reaction was his typical stoicism. He said that in a practical sense he needed to have a better understanding of the purpose of the mission, more details on USG requirements, and a description of the activities that would take place there. At this time both AMB Olson and Col Sprague (USLO) described the Manas trans-loading mission to the CoS. Gen Hamid Thani stated, "frankly I prefer not to have forces further South toward SAFRAN. It's already busy with the Air Force, Critical National Infrastructure Authority and UAE helos in support of border patrol." He went on to say "your requirement is important. There could be three or four other alternatives, but we need more details." (He looked to his Director of Staff, BG Farris, and between them they mentioned Minhadd AB but quickly agreed it's already quite busy as well ref Australian and

Canadian build-up and a potential NATO AWACS deployment) CoS stated that "with more details, I can speak to my Air Force leadership (on alternatives)." Ambassador raised the possibility that NATO, in addition to US troops might be involved. The COS said the US was one thing, NATO quite another. (Comment: We took this to mean no to non-US NATO troops.)

¶15. (S) Gen Hamid Thani changed the subject to ask Amb Olson's thoughts on the G-20 summit in London. After a brief exchange, Gen Hamid Thani thanked the Amb for his time and asked again for more details on the Manas request; only then could he support the site survey.

¶16. (S) Comment: We believe that the request for access/use of SAFRAN AB came truly as a surprise to the UAE CoS. We may be asked to consider other alternatives in the UAE. However, this was a gut reaction, and in other instances the COS has moved away from initial reticence after consultation with his component commanders.

¶17. (S) Action Request: Embassy Abu Dhabi recommends USCENCOM summarize the Manas concept of operations to be executed at the UAE location and include a summary, with mid-level detail, of logistical requirements. With this information, we believe the UAE may approve the site survey(s).

OLSON